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THE SHAKING TENT RITE AMONG PLAINS AND FOREST ALGONQUIANS

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121 114 THE purpose of the present paper is to bring together and make available some scattered field notes on the conjuring and "shaking tent" complex of northern North America, a subject that has recently evoked a good deal of discussion, particularly in the valuable interpretative monographs of Ray and Hallowell.[1] The data to be presented are from the Algonquian-speaking Montagnais, Cree, Oteipwe, Blood-Blackfoot, and Gros Ventres (of Montana), and the Siouan-speaking Assiniboine. Only certain high-light features of the Montagnais, Cree, and Oteipwe rite will be mentioned; the complete field data gathered by the writer will be given in monographs to be published later. On the Blood-Blackfoot, Gros Ventres, and Assiniboine, my field data will be given here in full. Information obtained on the Blood-Blackfoot and Assiniboine shaking tent rite is very fragmentary. It was gotten under conditions that did not leave time or opportunity for detailed investigation. Leisurely field work on this item among these people would in all probability net a much ampler yield. Information on the Gros Ventre rite is much fuller, but, even so, is probably not exhaustive.

GROS VENTRE RITE

114 787 It was in 1931 during a very brief one-day reconnaissance visit to the Fort Belknap Reservation that the writer first heard of the shaking tent rite among the Gros Ventres, from a group

[1] V. F. Ray, Historic backgrounds of the conjuring complex in the Plateau and the Plains, in L. Spier et al., ed., Language, culture, and personality: Essays in memory of Edward Sapir, Menasha, Wis., 1941, 204–16, bibl. 215–16; A. I. Hallowell, The role of conjuring in Saulteaux society Publ., Philadelphia anthropological society, v. 2, Phila., 1942, incl. bibl. pp. 89–96.

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of men, including Stiff Arm, a noted Gros Ventre medicine man, who has since died.[1] Only a few details were obtained: the rite within a regular tepee with spectators present; the tying of the performer with ropes, his escape therefrom, and after his escape the ropes in a ball which could not be untied; the summoning of the spirit of the deceased relative by the performer; the shaking of the tent "as in a cyclone" when the spirit came; talking "from above" by the spirit; singing by the performer and by the others in the tepee.

Later in August-September, 1939 and 1940, fuller information on the shaking tent rite was secured in connection with a general study of Gros Ventre society and religion, from The Boy and Thick, two of the older and best informed men among the Gros Ventres. These fuller data here follow.

Spiritual helpers among the Gros Ventres were of two kinds, ghosts of deceased persons and beings who had never been men.[2] The latter, the ordinary guardian spirits, by far the more common, do not concern us here as they do not enter at all into the Gros Ventre shaking tent rite. Only ghosts so enter.

A ghost helper, tsatsawâ'ᵃ (–â– and superior a nasalized),[3] was usually acquired in the following way. It was not sought by fasting and crying out on the hills, the customary procedure for acquiring non-ghostly guardian spirits and power. In fact there was either no quest of any kind or at most a somewhat indirect one. The usual sequence was as follows. A surviving relative would keep in his or her possession some memento or keepsake—something the deceased had prized greatly, some belonging such as a whip, or a tooth or bit of hair of the departed one.[4] The keepsake was kept, not worn. It was kept not for the purpose of acquiring the ghost of the deceased relative (a father or other close relative), but solely or at least chiefly, so far as I could gather, out of regard for the departed.

In most cases where such mementos were kept nothing happened. In some few cases, however, the keeping led to the acquisition of a ghost helper by the keeper. The first intimations the keeper had of the intentions of the deceased relative were knockings, or whistlings, or other kinds of disturbance around

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787 where the memento was kept. After a while the ghost would
776 come to the keeper, the surviving relative, on successive visits and talk to him (or her), telling him its intention of becoming his ghost helper, and finally putting him in a deep sleep ("killing" him) and saying to him: "I shall be your tsatsawâ·'a." In other words, it was the ghost, not the surviving relative, who regularly took the initiative and broke the ice. In fact, the latter had little or no freedom to accept or refuse.

By the ghost the survivor in trance would be taught the procedure to use for summoning and dealing with the ghost, how to put incense in the smudge place in the person's own lodge, how to lay the pipe, the direction of stem and bowl, what kind of food to put out, and so forth. A key element in such teaching was a special song, given by the ghost to be sung in said rite. One
776 such song, recorded by me in 1940 as sung by The Boy but not
787 yet transcribed, a wordless song sung to the accompaniment of a
791 drum, had belonged to a woman named "Woman." She had
[533] been taught it by the ghost of her deceased husband (or brother), Wawathana'tca * (a's nasalized) "Bad-bad Bull." He had been a medicine man when still living, and this had been his "power" song. His ghost gave it to her both as the song to summon his ghost with and as a doctoring song. She had therefore both ghost-summoning and doctoring power. While that old woman had both a ghost helper and doctoring power, the two things did not necessarily go together in the same person. One could have a ghost helper without having doctoring power, and vice versa. No one lacking a ghost helper could conduct the shaking tent rite, no matter how great power he had received by fasting and crying, and no matter what guardian spirit or spirits he had acquired. After her husband's death the above old woman had not married. People were a little afraid of her because she had this ghost helper. She was a capable old woman, with lots of horses; some of her breed of horses are still (1940) around. She died around 1907.

* Owing to delays and difficulties under present war conditions in obtaining symbols not in our printer's stock a and e with a stroke above them are here printed in italic.

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Other songs, distinct from this summoning or shaking tent rite song, were also given and taught at times by ghost helpers. Two of them, both victory songs, were recorded as sung by The Boy in 1940. These two were given on occasions other than that on which the surviving relative initially acquired his ghost helper.

After all the above teaching was concluded, the ghost of the deceased relative belonged to the survivor and was supposed to come whenever summoned by the latter in the manner the ghost told him while in trance to do. A great many Gros Ventre men and women had guardian spirits and "power" acquired by fasting and crying or otherwise. But fewer individuals, men and women, had ghost helpers. My informants in 1939 and 1940 could recall only four persons in the last two generations or last 70 years or so who had had ghost helpers.

In one case (see first of the two appended stories by Thick) two spirits tried to come to the shaking tent rite conducted by Woman, one bad and the other good, but whether the bad one was one of her deceased relatives or not, she never knew. The people were under the impression that the bad one was an intruder who used to come first and try to "horn in" on the proceedings. No case of a given person clearly having more than one ghost helper was recalled by my informants.

Ordinary "power" could be and often was transferred by the possessor to another person by donation or bequeathment. But a ghost helper never was so transferred and could not be.

It may be added that neither my informants, The Boy and Thick, nor my interpreter, Thomas Main, all highly intelligent and informed men, were at all sure of the etymology of the word tsatsawâ·ᵃ. The Boy thought it might connote the meaning of "slave," "some one who is forced to do things." Thomas Main suggested a possible relationship to tsatsa—"coming, flight"; plus—wa, an old Gros Ventre word, meaning unknown. The two words for ordinary ghosts as such are tsa·k'ᵃ (sing.; pl., tsa·k'an: a's as u in English but), and bie'te'ᵉ (sing.; pl. bi'eten). Tsatsawâ·ᵃ is used exclusively for ghost helpers, not for an ordinary ghost, or ghosts in general. An ordinary medicine man was called nata'nhehi (a's as u in but), but there was no special name

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791 in use to designate those who had a ghost helper: of him or her
787 it was merely said: "He (or she) has a tsatsawâ'ᵃ."

Persons who had a ghost helper commanded great respect, and were bothered by no one. But capable medicine men on whom the people depended to doctor their sick were also greatly respected. My informants did not feel that either class of practitioners as such had greater prestige than the other.

787 In the shaking tent rite, no other spirits than the given ghost
776 had any part, and only the one ghost ever had part in a given performance. Neither guardian spirits, nor the "Little Spirit," nor Ba'a', nor the Supreme Being (Iˣtcibⁱnᵘ'a't'ᵃ; the a before t nasalized) enters into it in any manner. The summoned ghost came not from any of these or their abodes, but from Basna'ᵃbe'ᵉ,
[775] the Big Sand, whither the souls of all Gros Ventres, except murderers of their own tribesmen, went after death and lived.

The function of the ghost helper was to give knowledge about past, present, future, or distant happenings, and counsel and direction in illness or danger. He imparted information. He did not as such grant power. Some of the many things he would be questioned about were: How a war expedition under way or an impending battle, or an illness, would come out? Where were the enemy located and what were their plans? Who had stolen a certain valuable article and where was it? He was not asked questions about trivial or silly matters, or about the fidelity or infidelity of a wife, although he sometimes volunteered information on such things. If some noted or loved person were critically ill, the ghost helper might be summoned and if it said: "His (the sick person's) soul is already over there," this meant he was going to die.

787 Where the services of one who had a ghost helper were desired,
791 the usual procedure was for the client or clients to go to him (or her) and offer him a pipe to smoke—this in accordance with general Gros Ventre practice in enlisting the aid of anyone with any kind of power. Those who had ghost helpers were commonly reluctant or even afraid to summon their helper: after the performance they felt tired and sore. But if given a pipe to call the

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ghost, they could not refuse, at least not easily. And if they accepted the pipe, they committed themselves definitely. 787 791

The summoning rite was performed only at night, with the fire out, regardless of the severity of the weather, and in darkness. In the two narratives by The Boy appended infra the ghost helper spoke in the daytime, but had been summoned the preceding night. The rite was ordinarily performed in the performer's lodge, he being hidden out of sight of the clients or spectators behind a blanket-curtain hung up for this purpose to partition off a segment of the lodge. Away from the camp, the rite was sometimes performed in an emergency shelter or a sweat lodge. Before the rite, the clients got ready a pipe and tobacco, a dish of puppy meat (an earlier Gros Ventre delicacy), and other food, [262] and at the appointed time for the rite brought these to the lodge of the ghost-possessor.

The performer was then bound with thongs. The four fingers (thumb too?) of each hand were tied tightly together by interlacing them (somewhat after the technique of wrapped or twined basketry), the hands were tied behind the back, he was rolled in his blanket and tied around securely with thongs, with only his head protruding, and then was deposited behind the blanket partition out of sight of the spectators.

It appears to have been a common practice for the performer to challenge the most skeptical member of the party, and ask him to do the tying. Various stories of skeptics were narrated to me.

On one occasion when the main body of the Gros Ventres, then 787 at war with the Piegan (or Blackfoot), were camped on the east 776 side of Judas River and a small band of them on the west side, the ghost helper of one of the Gros Ventres in the small band told them: "Tell the people to leave this small camp and go across the river to the big one, for the enemy is going to raid tonight." But many of the Gros Ventres of the small band said: "Ghosts are big liars. We are not cowards to run." Of the skeptics many remained, while about half crossed back to the big camp. About dawn, the enemy came as the ghost had predicted and nearly all who had remained at the small camp were massacred.

On another occasion when the Gros Ventres had (or were

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787 776 about to have) a big battle with the Crows at Marias (at the junction of the Marias with the Missouri), a young man who was present at a ghost helper rite, with the fires out and pitch-darkness in the lodge, and who doubted that a ghost could come back, decided to experiment. When the ghost helper came and the noise was heard, the young man, who was sitting near the door in the darkness where no one else could see he was exposed, pushed his breechclout aside and exposed his genitals, saying to himself: "If this is really a ghost, he will see me and do something about it." All of a sudden the young man let out a yell as if hit by someone, and ran out of the lodge. "You had better run. What is being done here is the real thing," said the ghost to the young fellow, and added to the crowd: "I hit that young fellow's genitals sharply with a stick; that is why he dashed out of the lodge." They then asked the young man: "Is that what happened?" And he replied: "Yes. He hit me good and hard there," and he became a believer.

This emphasis on skeptics in non-narrative and narrative accounts of the Gros Ventre shaking tent rite would suggest that the rope-escaping feat, which we may call for short the "Houdini trick," had the purpose, overt or covert, of creating or confirming faith in the authenticity of the ghostly visitation.

The Houdini trick ordinarily formed part of the Gros Ventre shaking tent rite, but to judge from a couple of the stories appended to this paper, was not absolutely indispensable and could, in emergency, be omitted.

791 787 776 Right after being tied, the ghost-possessor to the accompaniment of his drum sang his summoning song which the ghost had given him. As the ghost helper approached the lodge, a whistling as of wind could be heard, and sometimes at least an owl call,—owls and ghosts are closely associated in Gros Ventre thought, ghosts appearing or speaking as owls. As the ghost came through the top of the lodge, the top would shake violently, and then the whole lodge would shake.

The ghost would then go to the performer and blow on him, and all the sinews and thongs with which he was tied would become untied, and they would be rolled in a ball so knotted and

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tangled that it could not itself be easily unravelled and would so be thrown out at the spectators, or at the one who had done the tying, especially if he were a skeptic, with some such challenge to him from the ghost as: "You tied up this person. Now see if you can untangle this ball of thong." 791 787 776

Next the pipe would be lit and held up in the darkness in the direction where the ghost was supposed to be, for the ghost to smoke, and the spectators would see the pipe glow up rhythmically every time the ghost drew on it. The people in the lodge would finish smoking this pipe. After this the ghost would ask: "People, why did you send for me?" They would tell him what they wanted to know. If the ghost knew the answer offhand, he would answer at once. If he did not know, he would say: "I don't know. I'll go and find out. You sing that song again [the one the ghost taught the performer when he first chose the latter; no other song was sung] and I'll come back and tell you."

As soon as the ghost went out, a little fire would be made, and the spectators had a smoke. Then they put out the fire and sang the ghost song. They would not have to wait long, "for a ghost travels just about as fast as a man thinks." On returning it would give the information that had been sought of it.

Most ghosts talked a whistling talk. But some—those possessed by Plenty-dry-meat-old-man and by Morning-star, two old men whose ghost helpers were among the greatest ones remembered and whose prophecies always came true—talked just in a natural voice.

After the ghost helper had given the information desired (or perhaps earlier, after his smoke at the beginning; I could not clear up the point) he was offered the food that had been prepared. And the spectators, still in the dark, would hear the tapping of the ghost's fingernails on the plate or other sound of eating as the ghost partook of some of the food.

When he had finished eating, he would say something like: "If you are done with me, I shall go," and he would depart by way of the top of the tent, which would shake violently as it had done when the ghost first arrived in it. After the ghost helper had taken his final departure, the performer would come out

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791 787 776 [782] from behind the blanketed enclosure, the fire would be re-lighted, the performer would say the prayer customary among the Gros Ventres before all meals to the Supreme Being and other beings, then he or she and the others present would eat the food that had remained from the ghost's repast. Finally they would all sit around smoking and chatting a while before dispersing. I failed to gather any information on whether the performer receives any payment or not for his or her services in the rite.

Certain simplifications of the above procedure under emergency conditions as on war expeditions are noted or intimated in a couple of the following four narratives, the first two given by The Boy, the last two by Thick.

NARRATIVE 1

787 776 539 The following story was told by The Boy.

"A certain man had his deceased father as his ghost helper. The ghost helper used to speak Gros Ventre just like living people but in a bass voice. Everybody understood him when they heard him.

"On one occasion the Gros Ventre tribe were camped near the forks of the Teton and Marias Rivers. While there a large group of the men decided to go on the warpath. So they left the main camp, went up the Missouri River and camped that first night at the mouth of Crow Creek where it empties into the Missouri River. When it was dark that night some of the men said: 'Let's offer the pipe to X [the one mentioned above who had the ghost helper; name not given] and ask him to find out whether our prospects on this war party are good or bad.' So they filled up a pipe and went to X, held out the pipe to him and asked him: 'Accept the pipe and call your spirit.'

[791] "X accepted willingly and soon after they had smoked the pipe together they made a shelter where X was to do the spirit-rite. So they tied up X, filled the pipe again, put it there and sang a song four times. When they were singing it the fourth time they heard a voice in the air. The ghost helper arrived and the shelter shook as a lodge would have done in the same rite. When the spirit hit the ground, the ground shook too. The spirit

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seemed excited and kept repeating: 'What do you want, my children?' and added: 'If you were in my place and were as old and feeble as I am, you wouldn't like to be disturbed. But here I am. What do you want?' They answered: 'We want to know how this venture of ours is going to turn out,—well or badly.' Then they lit the pipe and offered it to the spirit and they could see from the rhythmic glaring of the pipe that the ghost helper was smoking. After he had smoked he replied: 'Well, I don't know offhand. I'll have to look around and investigate. I am going away to look around. While I am gone you smoke and after a while sing again and I'll come back.' The ghost helper went away with a noise and commotion as always.

"They sat around and smoked and after a while sang again. The ghost helper came back blowing as if catching his breath, as an old man does, and said: 'My children, Crow Indians without number are invading the camp you just left. Knowing you men are away they are so bold that they are peeping into the lodges at your women and watching them playing the hand game. Your women are in happy mood. These Crow Indians seem to be preparing to take all the Gros Ventre horses. I shall go back and watch to see what they will do. Meanwhile you do as you did before: sit around and smoke and then sing. I'll come back and make a final report.' And so they talked and smoked and sang.

"Then the ghost helper came back bringing with him one hair from the head of a Crow. This was not a scalp but was only a hair representing a scalp and was wrapped around a piece of sagebrush. It was brought to convince the Gros Ventres there was no danger. Then the ghost helper reported: 'The Crows have taken practically all your horses and about sun-up will arrive where you now are. You need have no fear of the Crows provided you do just one thing. Be sure to kill the Crow with the blue blanket coat (with hood). He is the one brave man in the crowd. Kill him first and you will kill all the others. None of the Gros Ventres will be actually killed, but two of them will be wounded. In case you do not kill the Crow with the blue coat the outcome of the battle will be doubtful. But if you kill the

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787 Crow with the blue coat you will kill all the Crows and get your
776 horses back.' The Gros Ventres asked the ghost helper which
539 two of their party would be wounded, but were not told by the ghost helper. If they had been told they would not have let these two go into battle.

"By the time they were through with the spirit it was near daylight. So they decided not to go to sleep but to wait up the rest of the night. [Here followed a long detailed description of the battle with the Crows beginning around daylight.] The Crow with the blue coat escaped. Of the sixty Crows in all, forty were killed. No Gros Ventres were killed, but two were wounded—two members of my own [The Boy's] clan. While the party was still at the war camp, some distance from the main camp, the ghost helper came and said: 'I came to hear the news. Did you kill the man with the blue coat?' They answered: 'No.' The ghost helper said: 'It is your own fault. If you had, you would have killed all the Crows. But anyhow you did well and have done yourselves credit. I am going to teach
[727] you a victory song so you can sing it when you get back to camp.' So he taught them this victory song[2] and they learned it and he said to them: 'Well, my children, I am going home. When I get back to my place of abode I will celebrate that victory too. I will give you charcoal [it was the custom for returning victors to paint themselves black] and I'll bring charcoal to my own land and celebrate.'

"The foregoing incident happened in the time of my [The Boy's] grandfather, Crow Moccasin."

Narrative 2

The story which here follows was also told by The Boy.

"The Gros Ventres were camped east of (the site of) Lewistown (south of the Missouri River). A party of Gros Ventre warriors left the camp to go on the warpath against the Sioux. One of this Gros Ventre party was known to have a ghost helper.

[2] This song as sung by The Boy was recorded in the field in 1940, together with about 120 other Gros Ventre songs, but I have not found it possible, as yet, to get any of the records transcribed for publication.

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The party traveled north and when they arrived at the river they camped there. Some of the men said: 'Morning-star-appears (or Morning-star-is-up: the man with the ghost helper) should be approached to find out what our prospects are on this expedition.' It was agreed among themselves that they would make a sweat lodge. 797 776 539

"Among those invited to sweat was Morning-star-appears. While they were sweating they offered the pipe to him to get him to call his helper. He agreed. Then they all smoked and got ready in the sweat lodge. [79]

"The ghost helper came to the sweat lodge for the possessor was right there. Just before the helper alighted he whistled violently and rapidly. Then the sweat lodge shook and they heard the ghost helper say: 'What do you want? Why did you call me?' They said: 'We are going on the warpath after the Sioux. What success will we have? Is there any danger?' So they offered the lighted pipe to the ghost helper and saw it smoked by him. After smoking, the ghost helper said: 'I'll go and see first before I answer. You go ahead and smoke and after a while sing again.' This they did.

"The ghost helper came back in the usual way, and highly elated, and said: 'All right, I am ready to tell you. First here is a strand of hair of a man (a Sioux) whom you will kill tomorrow. This represents his scalp.' It was wrapped around sagebrush. He continued: 'I have found a big Sioux camp on Beaver Creek [east of the Little Rocky Mountains]. The Sioux are having a big Grass Dance. The one who is having the most fun is the one you are to kill tomorrow. He is a handsome man and has a sword. You will capture that sword when you kill him. Don't be afraid. No Gros Ventre will be killed but two of you Gros Ventres don't look good to me.' They said to the ghost helper: 'Name the two.' But he refused to do so, saying: 'Just don't be afraid. Go ahead to the place where the Sioux are and attack them. Choose now what kind of weather you wish after the fight tomorrow, and I will see that the weather will be that way.' They failed, however, to make a choice. The ghost helper also said: 'Every once in a while tomorrow take

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787 a look at the sun. There will be all kinds of sundogs tomorrow,
776 changing every little while. When they appear you will know
539 that I have told you the truth.'

"Then the ghost helper left and the Gros Ventres slept until early morning. [Here followed a long description by The Boy of the battle.] Just one Sioux was killed in the battle, a very handsome man with a sword, as the ghost helper had predicted. Likewise they saw the sundogs changing. The Gros Ventres, however, after this first skirmish realized that the Sioux would soon get reorganized and that their own situation was perilous. So they called on Morning-star-appears to cause such weather that the Sioux could not catch them. He sang his song, using his robe as a cover in which to enclose himself, and said: 'We wish rain.' At once a cloud appeared and in a short time grew into a great black storm cloud; then came a perfect cloudburst, with thunder and lightning, in which you couldn't see any distance. Under this cover the Gros Ventres escaped from the pursuing Sioux and got back to camp safely with no loss of life, although two of their number had had narrow escapes, just as the ghost helper had said: 'Two of you do not look good to me.'

"The above occurred in Stiff Arm's time, when he was a young man. The man who killed the Sioux was Crazy Bull. I do not recall the name of the ghost helper, but this same ghost helper on this occasion taught the Gros Ventres a song to use in their celebration after the victory."[2]

NARRATIVE 3

787 The following two stories were told me by Thick.
539 "A certain old woman (her great-great-grandchild is still living) had a ghost helper. Her name was 'Woman' but for various reasons she was nicknamed 'Bear Old Woman.' When I was about ten years old a party of Gros Ventres was camped at Lodge Pole, about two miles from the Little Rocky Mountains. One night Cree enemies came and stole all the Gros

[2] This song as sung by The Boy was recorded in 1940.

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Ventres' horses except those belonging to one man. This man loaned out his horses as far as they would go around to four of the Gros Ventres who went in pursuit of the Cree. 787 539

"Then that evening two of the other men, one of them my father, approached Bear Old Woman. They filled up a pipe just as you do when you go to someone to doctor you, offered it to the old woman, and asked her to find out from her ghost helper who stole the horses and where they were. Bear Old Woman, who had quite a temper, got angry right away as usual and pushed the pipe away as a sign of refusal. Finally one of the young fellows there, a relative of hers, said: 'Well, let me smoke it,' to force her to accept. She angrily grabbed the pipe and had to go through with the rite. When she took the pipe she rubbed her hands on the ground and rubbed dust on the pipe and offered a prayer before smoking. The pipe was then smoked by her and by the two men who had approached her. 787 539 791 [782]

"Then they began to get things ready. They killed a puppy, singed its hair off at a fire, took its insides out without skinning, quartered it up and boiled it. They put the boiled meat on a plate and got ready some other kinds of food to give to the old woman. Then the two men filled up a pipe and they together with two other men and with a 'servant' went to Bear Old Woman's lodge. On arriving there they set down the plate of dog meat near the head of her bed, the pipe between the incense hearth and the lodge fire, and the other dishes between the lodge fire and the door. [262 252]

"When everything was arranged and Bear Old Woman was still sitting on her bed, she said: 'Whoever is the greatest unbeliever among you, come and tie me up.' One of the four volunteered. Then the old woman got up and went to a place just south of the head of the bed, to a little enclosure made by hanging up a blanket. He hobbled her four fingers (thumb too?) with sinew, interlacing it in and out of the four fingers of each hand. Then he tied her hands together behind her back and also hobbled her feet. She was lying on a robe. He gathered the robe around her and tied her with rawhide thongs until only her head stuck out of the robe. And so he left her lying on her

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787 back. He returned to his place to the southeast of the old
539 woman and sat down.
791 "Then Bear Old Woman said: 'All right. Start to sing now.' They sang four times without stopping, the song belonging to the old woman's ghost helper. As they were singing the third time they heard an owl and the old woman said: 'Don't receive *that* spirit. He is bad. Continue singing.' So they continued and just as they finished the fourth time the old woman said: 'That is the one. Receive *that* spirit.' The people around heard these two owls.

787 "When the second owl lighted on top of the lodge, the top
539 shook and the ghost helper spoke: 'What do you want me for?'
776 They said: 'We want you to tell us where our horses are and who has them so we can find them.' The ghost helper answered: 'All right. I'll have to go look for them, but you go ahead and smoke this pipe [the one lying near the incense hearth]. When you have smoked up what is in the pipe, refill it and put it back in the same place and wait.'

"They had barely started smoking when the ghost helper was back again. So they just dumped out what was left in the pipe and refilled it. The helper said: 'Never mind. I am hungry and want to eat.' But they didn't mind him. The spirit then said: 'Your horses are not very far away from here. Your four friends have already recaptured your horses and are bringing them back.' He also said to my father: 'One of your horses has a thick broad rawhide rope around his neck and is dragging it, and that other man's mare's colt will play out on the trip back home.'

"After the helper had said all this, the four men judged that he was through, so they took the pipe and lit it and offered the helper a smoke. The inside of the old woman's lodge was dark as there was no fire. The helper took the pipe from their hands and then they saw it light up rhythmically as a pipe does when it is puffed, and after taking a few puffs the helper said to the men: 'You smoke the rest. I am hungry and want to eat.' They could hear him chewing on the dog meat inside where the woman was. After a while the helper said to the men: 'Here.

6: Cooper E-5 (1931-1940) 1944
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

You can eat the rest of this pup.' The meat had been eaten off 787
of one hind leg of the pup so that just the bones were left. Then 539
the ghost helper said: 'I see this foolish old woman lying here 776
helpless.' Then they heard a noise as if the helper had struck the old woman with the flat of his hand and he was heard blowing. The next instant the ghost helper said: 'Here, try to untie this,' and the knotted sinew and rawhide thong hit the chest of the man who had tied her up.

"Then they heard the old woman give a long sigh. She had [791]
been in a trance all this time and was just coming out of it. Next the ghost helper said: 'Now I am going to leave you.' And they heard the same racket at the top of the lodge they had heard when he first came in and there was a violent shaking of the whole lodge, especially at the top of it.

"After the ghost helper was gone they kindled the fire again
and there was light. Bear Old Woman came out of the enclosure [791]
and sat down on the bed and prayed with the bowls of food in her hand. Then she and the men ate and afterwards sat around and smoked and chatted. Then the men went home and told what the spirit had said.

"Next morning all the people in the camp, including the chil- 787
dren, got up early and went up on the highest nearby ground to 539
look for the four men coming back with the horses. Towards evening of the day the four Gros Ventres who had gone in pursuit of the thieves brought all the horses back, except the one which, as the spirit had said, had played out and could not stand the trip back. And one of my father's horses had a rope around its neck as the ghost helper had said it had. The pursuers had caught up with the Cree and surprised them asleep in a little swamp covered with grass and brush and so took the horses back home. On the return trip they got lost in a bad storm, went in the wrong direction and not until daylight did they discover their mistake and so had to circle their way back. They had neither eaten nor slept during all the two days and night they had been gone.

"The above incident occurred just at about the time when the buffalo disappeared from this part of the country [1880's]."

6: Cooper E-5 (1931-1940) 1944
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

NARRATIVE 4

787 Here is the second story told me by Thick.

539 791 "There was a man by the name of Bird Child who had a ghost helper. Bird Child's wife had four brothers, one of them my father. One evening they filled a pipe and went to Bird Child's lodge to get him to find out from his ghost helper where there would be lots of buffalo and no danger, so they could go there and hunt. When they arrived at Bird Child's lodge they found him absent and only his wife in the lodge. Without invitation they made themselves at home and asked their sister where Bird Child was. She answered: 'I don't know where he is nor when he will be back.'

737 776 539 607 "Being Bird Child's brothers-in-law they decided to take the liberty of using Bird Child's power and ghost helper, and of having a seance in his absence. They asked their sister where Bird Child's bundle was. She showed them. One of the four brothers took it down. They then agreed who was to be tied up and to represent Bird Child. The one of the four designated agreed. They had him lie down and two of them tied him up tight and laid him in an enclosure made along the side of the tent [as in preceding story]. They were half-fooling, not quite serious, Their sister couldn't say anything: they imposed on her. They even attached the man's hair to the ropes with which they bound him in the robe until only his mouth was visible.

"Then they started to sing and sang the same song four times without stopping. At the end they heard yelling in the air and said: 'There he is. He has come for us.' As the ghost helper arrived the tent shook and the helper said: 'Who's that lying back there?" and answered himself: 'Some crazy man or someone with no regard for anybody's rights.' Then they heard a commotion behind the enclosure. The bound brother started to hollow for mercy. Next one of the brothers who had done the tying got hit with all the ropes tangled in a knot.

"Then they heard the bound man being thrown towards the door, and saying: 'Hurry up and make a light before this ghost helper kills me.' The spirit had picked him up and was trying

6: Cooper E-5 (1931-1940) 1944
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13
Blackfoot NF6

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to wedge him between the poles in the lodge. By this time, however, the other brothers had kindled a fire and of course as soon as the flame flared up the spirit was gone. The ghost helper was good and mad, but anyhow had come."

Blackfoot-Blood Rite

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On a casual visit to Browning, Montana, in August, 1931, the writer was given some information by Mrs. Frances (Joseph) Brown of Browning on the Blackfoot shaking tent rite. The rite is performed by a woman who is a sort of "spiritualist" or "medium," as Mrs. Brown put it. She summons the dead-spirits [spirit?] and they come and answer questions. Only she can understand the language of the dead spirits and can converse with them. She tells their answers to the other people who are around. During the rite, people are all around in the tipi. A curtain is put over a part of the interior of the tipi, and the "medium" sits behind the curtain. The lights are extinguished. Food is put on a plate. During the rite noises are heard "inside" [apparently behind the curtain], and everything moves, including the tent itself. It was emphasized to me that this rite is an old Indian one, not a modern intrusion of white spiritualistic seances.

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While talking with The Boy (Gros Ventre) in August 1940 about the Gros Ventre ghost helper complex, he told me the following story that his friend, Platted Hair, a Blood from Canada, had told him on a visit to him some time before:

A long time ago, before the Gros Ventres came and when the Snakes still occupied this part of the country, a large party of Bloods came over toward the Little Rockies and never returned to their home country. Their people at home did not know what to make of it. One of the Bloods in the home camp had a ghost helper. So they gave this Blood a pipe to summon his ghost helper. When the ghost arrived, he asked: "Why did you send for me?" They said: "Our young men went on a war party and did not return. What has happened to them?" The ghost said: "I'll go and see. You may sing the song. I'll come back and I may be able to tell you what has happened." So the

6: Cooper E-5 (1931-1940) 1944
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13
Blackfoot NF6 Assiniboine NF4
Montagnais NH6
Ojibwa NG6
Cree NG4

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ghost went away. They waited and sang the song. When the ghost came back, they asked him: "What did you find out?" He replied: "I went clear to the Little Rockies and the Bear Paws. Between the two ranges, a creek makes a big bend, and in the middle of the big bend is a ridge. There your young men got killed."

When some years ago, The Boy told me, the road between Hays (at the foot of the Little Rockies) and Three Buttes was being built, on a ridge several holes were found in the rocks, and in one of the holes five skulls, as if a fight had occurred there. Platted Hair believed this to have been the scene of the above fight.

G B [177]

We may add that there has been a great deal of close association between the Gros Ventres and the Blackfoot-Blood-Piegan, especially in recent generations.

Assiniboine Rite

The writer's first information on the shaking tent rite among the Assiniboine of Fort Belknap Reservation (which they have long shared with the Gros Ventres) came as a casual afterthought from a Gros Ventre informant in 1931. After giving the summary account of the Gros Ventre rite recorded earlier in this article, he added that the same rite is also found among the Fort Belknap Assiniboine.

G A [171]

In the summer of 1940, my chief Gros Ventre informant, The Boy, stated that the Fort Belknap Assiniboine also had the ghost helper concept. In the case of one ghost-possessor at least, there were bells on top [or at the top] of his lodge, and when the ghost helper came, the bells would shake and the whole top of the lodge would shake. This possessor's name was "Standing Dog," or "Dog Rises," or a similar name. One ghost is credited with having thrown a performer on top of the lodge frame. Further details were not known by The Boy, and I had no good opportunity to consult the Assiniboine themselves.

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C M O [171]

Montagnais-Cree-Otcipwe Rite

The "shaking tent" rite is universal or practically so among

6: Cooper E-5 (1931-1940) 1944
NQ13 Gros Ventre
Cree NG4 Montagnais NH6
Ojibwa NG6

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the Montagnais, Cree and Otcipwe. Most of the frequent records in the literature have been assembled by Ray and Hallowell.[4] I have field records of its occurrence among the following:

(a) Montagnais: Whale River, Fort George, Eastmain, Nemiskaw, Neoskweskaw, Rupert House, Waswanipi, Mistassini; (b) Cree: (1) Eastern forest Cree: Têtes de Boule, Kesagami, Moose Factory, Albany, Cape Henrietta; (2) Western forest Cree: Ft. Chipewyan (Lake Athabaska), Ft. McMurray (Athabaska River); (3) Plains Cree: Rocky Boy (Mont.); (c) Otcipwe(-Algonkin): L.Abitibi, Wikwemikong (Manitoulin Island), Rainy Lake, Lake of the Woods, English River (affluent of Albany R.), Ft. Hope (upper Albany R.), Osnaburgh (ibid.).

In the 16 of the above 23 bands for which dependable data were secured regarding the type of tent used in the rite (relevant data on this point were not secured for Whale River, Eastmain, Mistassini, Wikwemikong, English River, Rainy Lake, McMurray), the tent was one specially constructed, not a regular dwelling lodge or a partitioned section thereof. In all 16 cases this tent was cylindrical or barrel-shaped or "vertical,"—not beehive or low-domed shaped as sweat lodges usually are, nor strictly conical like tipis.

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The chief spirit informant or spokesman among the many spirits or beings who customarily come into the tent during the rite was: (a) Mista'beo (Mieta'beo), among the Montagnais of Eastmain, Rupert House, Waswanipi and Mistassini; (b) Mi'kenak, the turtle, among the Cree of Albany, Moose Factory, Kesagami, and Ft. Chipewyan (at this last place, Mi'skenak), and among the Otcipwe(-Algonkin) of English River, Lake of the Woods and Rainy Lake; Oki'jiko, among the Cree-speaking Têtes-de-Boule (also pl. okijikouk), and the Otcipwe(-Algonkin) Abitibi (as pl. kijikuki).[5] Mikenak was definitely denied among both

[4] Ray, 1941; Hallowell, 1942. See footnote 1.

[5] Cf. Paul Le Jeune, Relation of 1634 Thwaites JR, 6: 162, khichikouai, "genii of the air" or "genii of light," who came into the Montagnais' shaking tent; ibid., 7: 100, khichicouakhi; same, Relation of 1637, JR, 11: 254, ka-khichigou khetikhi, "those who make the light," and khichikouekhi."

6: Cooper E-5 (1931-1940) 1944
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13
Assiniboine NF4
Blackfoot NF6
Montagnais NH6
Ojibwa NG6
Cree NG4

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the Têtes-de-Boule and the Abitibi. Mikenak, an Otcipwe (-Algonkin) form, among the above listed Cree groups points to diffusion of the name,—not necessarily of this particular spokesman, as is evidenced by the Ft. Chipewyan Mi'skenak. Mistabeo, as spokesman among the above-listed Montagnais bands, is an independent non-human being or spirit, not a man's "other self" or kind of soul.

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The "Houdini trick," in which the shaking tent performer escapes from the thongs with which he is tied, was found among the Cree of Ft. Chipewyan, McMurray, and Rocky Boy, the Otcipwe of Lake of the Woods, and the Otcipwe(-Algonkin) of Abitibi. This Abitibi occurrence marks the farthest eastern extension found by me of the trick in connection with the shaking tent.[6] I did not learn of its use among the Otcipwe of the upper Albany River at Ft. Hope and Osnaburgh, though fairly extensive information on the shaking tent rite was obtained at these two localities in 1927. The "Houdini trick" is definitely lacking among the James Bay Cree, the Têtes-de-Boule, and the Montagnais groups studied.[7]

Some further general and specific characteristics of the Montagnais-Cree-Otcipwe shaking tent rite will be given in the next section of the present paper.

CMO [114] GMOCAB 787 171

Generalizations

The following generalizations are based partly on the foregoing data, partly on the writer's still unpublished fuller field notes on the Montagnais, Cree, and Otcipwe(-Algonkin).

Certain characters are common to the rite as practised both among the forest Montagnais-Cree-Otcipwe and Plains Cree and among the Gros Ventres and—so far as our fragmentary infor-

[6] Father R. Déléage, O.M.I., Letter of Nov. 1, 1863, in Rapport sur les missions du diocèse de Québec, Mar., 1864, no. 16, pp. 74–75, reported the "Houdini trick" in connection with the shaking tent rite among, apparently, the Grand Lake Victoria Otcipwe(-Algonkin)-speaking Indians.

[7] It was earlier reported among the Cree of York Factory, by Thomas M'Keevor, A voyage to Hudson's Bay during the summer of 1812, London 1819, 58.

6: Cooper E-5 (1931-1940) 1944
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13
Assiniboine NF4 Cree NG4 Montaanais NH6
Blackfoot NF6 Ojibwa NG6

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mation goes—the Blackfoot-Blood and Ft. Belknap Assiniboine. These common features are: shaking of the top of the tent or lodge at entrance and departure of spirit; entrance and departure of spirit by way of top of lodge; departure, during rite, of spirit after being questioned, to find facts, and subsequent return to tent with desired answer; performer not possessed by spirit, but spirit(s) speak(s) to or in presence of performer; performer concealed from sight of spectators and clients during visitation by spirit(s); no trance or ecstasy by performer, and performers not of psychopathic personality as such; spirits summoned primarily to obtain through them knowledge, chiefly knowledge hidden by barriers of time (future) and space (distance), or counsel on practical problems; a smoke given the spirit(s), and spectators smoke; absence of direct participation of Supreme Being in rite (apart from a minor exception or two); rite as such concerned with personal beings, not with impersonal forces, and thus a religious, not a magical rite (as many define religion and magic).

In certain features, the rite among the forest Montagnais-Cree-Otcipwe and Plains Cree consistently differs from that among the Gros Ventre, Blackfoot-Blood and Ft. Belknap Assiniboine. In the rite as found among the former: while one of the spirits is usually the chief informant or spokesman, other spirits and beings ordinarily come into the tent during the rite; all these spirits and beings are animistic, not manistic—never ghosts; humor, joking, trivial banter by the visiting spirit common; the "Houdini trick" absent from Montagnais and eastern Cree rite; food is not offered to the visiting beings.

On the other hand, in the rite as found among the Gros Ventres and, so far as our limited information goes, the Blackfoot-Blood and Ft. Belknap Assiniboine: one spirit only comes into the tent; the spirit that is summoned is exclusively a ghost, a deceased relative of the performer; humor, joking, trivial banter by the ghost are lacking; the "Houdini trick" is customary, except in emergency; food, especially the delicacy, puppy meat, is offered to and partaken of by visiting ghost.

So far as my information goes, among the above Montagnais-

6: Cooper E-5 (1931-1940) 1944
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Assiniboine NF4 Montagnais NH6
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Cree NG4

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Cree-Oteipwe, the power to summon the shaking tent spirit(s) is not thrust upon the person by any spirit, as in a great measure it is among the Gros Ventres.

In general, the shaking tent rite appears to have much more relative importance and to play a much more preponderant role in the total magico-religious life of the Montagnais-Cree-Oteipwe than of the Gros Ventres, Blackfoot-Blood and Assiniboine.

BCMOCA [177]

That there is a historical relationship between the two above contrasted shaking tent complexes appears very probable from the many specific and distinctive elements they share in common and from the almost continuous geographical distribution of the complexes, a distribution moreover predominantly among the main body of Algonquian-speaking peoples of the taiga and adjacent open country and the aberrant-Algonquian-speaking groups of the Plains, the Gros Ventres, the Blackfoot, and the Cheyenne.

Addendum on Wider Distribution

G 787 171 [114]

It has not been the purpose of the present paper to deal with the total distribution of the shaking tent rite and with the historical problems connected with such distribution. The following summary notes are added merely to contribute a mite toward filling out the picture of distribution as given in Ray's historical study and Hallowell's socio-psychological one.[8]

In the east, the shaking tent is not reported in our published sources, to my knowledge, south of the St. Lawrence. The record by Maurault for the Abnaki does not mention shaking of the conjurer's tent.[9] Inquiries by the writer in the field in 1931 among the Chipewyan and Dogrib of the Mackenzie-Slave watershed brought consistently negative results; in fact informants who knew well and gave many details of the rite as practised among the Cree of Ft. McMurray (Athabaska R.) and Ft. Chipewyan (L. Athabaska), on the Cree-Chipewyan borderline, and who were equally familiar with both Cree and Chipewyan

[8] Ray, 1941; Hallowell, 1942. See footnote 1.

[9] J. A. Maurault, Histoire des Abenakis depuis 1605 jusqu'à nos jours, Québec, 1866, 30.

6: Cooper E-5 (1931-1940) 1944
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

culture, emphasized that the shaking tent rite was practised by the Cree only, and not by the Chipewyan, even in these border areas when the two peoples were in very close contact and association. 787 171

To the far north, however, the "Houdini trick" and the shaking of the conjurer's hut on the arrival of his spiritual helper was earlier reported by Boas among the Central Eskimos.[10] Lowie has also recorded among the Crow a tent-shaking rite very like that of the Gros Ventres and Cheyenne.[11] The first report and discussion, by Donald Collier, of the Kiowa occurrence is published in the present issue of Primitive Man. Regina Flannery has called my attention to the occurrence of the shaking-of-the-tent motif among the early Creek.[12]

Still farther afield, I have come across no reference to a shaking tent element in the many accounts of northern Asiatic and Lapp shamanism, but have made no thorough systematic search. In South America, I know of only one instance of a somewhat similar rite, that earlier reported among the Chiquitoan Manasi of eastern Bolivia. Part of the large public assembly hall was curtained off with mats, which part was reserved for the "high priest" alone and the visiting spirits. As the gods or spirits came down, a sound filled the air and shook the roof of the building and the mats. Chicha and food were offered the spirits. The people sang. The gods were consulted by the "high priest" about future events such as rains, harvests, fishing and hunting, whereabouts of game, outcome of prospective war raids.—the conversation being audible to the crowd outside the curtained compartment. The gods on departing shook the whole building as they ascended.[13]

[10] F. Boas, The central Eskimo, BAE-R 6 for 1884–85, Washington, 1888, 593–94.

[11] R. H. Lowie, The religion of the Crow Indians, AMNH-AP, v. 25, pt. 2 1922, 380–81; same, The Crow Indians, New York, 1935, 70–71.

[12] Captain Bossu, Travels through . . . Louisiana, tr., London, 1771, 1: 264–65, among the Allibamon (Alabama).

[13] A. Métraux, The social organization and religion of the Mojo and Manasi, in Primitive Man, 1943, 16: 22–23.

6: Cooper E-5 (1931-1940) 1944
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

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The more distant of the above instances, those from the Eskimo and Creek and from the Manasi of South America are merely set down here as of record. We are not justified—as yet—in assuming historical relationship. The distances seem too great, and the resemblances too vague and generic. What future more complete descriptive and distributional information may suggest remains to be seen.